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## CORRESPONDENCE.

CHAUCER'S *Vitremyte* AGAIN.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS :—Tatlock, in *Notes*, xxi, 62, discusses Chaucer's *Vitremyte* with reference to Skeat's note and to Boccaccio's *galea vitrea*. The proverb of a glass helmet, or hood, in the sense of a cheat, a mock, is older, however, than Boccaccio or Langland or Chaucer. I stumbled upon it a day or two ago in the *Debate between the Body and the Soul*; see *The Latin Poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes*, 337/3, O. F. Emerson, *A Middle English Reader*, 56/14. I cite from Emerson :

pat tou lovedest me þou lete,  
And maðest me an houe of glas;  
I dide al þat þe was sete,  
And þou my traytor evere was.

The *Debate* is commonly assigned to the thirteenth century. See also *Celestin*, ed. Horstmann, *Anglia* i, 82/627; and the *Debate*, ed. Varnhagen, *Anglia* ii, 238/310. The *N. E. D.* sub *houe* discusses the proverb, I now see, but does not give the passages from Horstmann and Varnhagen.

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## A GREEK SOURCE OF MILTON.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS :—In Porphyrios *de Abſtinentia* 1. 16–17, occurs a passage which seems to be the source of Comus' speech against "the lean and fallow Abstinence" in Milton. "If all the world | should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse," Comus argues, nature "would be quite surcharged with her own weight, | And strangled with her waste fertility; | Th' earth cumber'd, and the wing'd air dark with plumes, | The herds would overmultitude their lords, | The sea o'erfraught would swell," etc.

Similarly, Porphyry makes an opponent of vegetarianism argue: "But suppose all men to accept the doctrine. What, then, will become of the increase of animals? . . . For the sea and the rivers and the ponds will be choke-full of fish, and the air of birds; and the earth will be filled with all kinds of creeping things. φέρε δὲ καὶ πεισθῆναι πάντας ἀνθρώπους τῷ δόγματι. τίνα τοίνυν ἢ ἐπιγονὴ τῶν ζώων ἔξει μοῖραν; . . . θάλασσα μὲν γὰρ καὶ ποταμοὶ καὶ λίμναι ἰχθύων πεπλήσονται, ὃ δὲ ἀπὸ ὀρνίθων, ἢ δὲ γῆ πλήρης ἐρπετῶν παντοίων.

While I am on the subject, I may note another parallel to the reply of the Lady, which, if not a source, is at least an interesting coincidence. The Lady says: "for swinish gluttony | Ne'er looks to heav'n amidst his gorgeous feast, | But with besotted base ingratitude | Crams, and blasphemes his feeder." In Dio Chrysostomus *Or.* 30 (vol. i, p. 340, Teubner), occur the words τοὺς μὲν γὰρ ἀσώτους καὶ ἀκρατεῖς οὔτε ὀρᾶν οὐδὲν, οὔτε ἀκούειν οὐδένος, ἀλλὰ ἐγκεκυφώτας ἐσθίειν ὥσπερ ἐν συφεῷ ἴς, i. e., "the prodigal and incontinent see nothing, hear nothing, but bend down their heads and eat like swine in the pen."

Dio is describing in allegory the splendid banquet which the gods prepare for mankind, and how the greedy and incontinent κατασχύνουσι καὶ ὑβρίζουσι τὴν χάριν τῶν θεῶν.

Milton's reading was doubtless wide enough to include both Porphyry and Dio.

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## THE FOREST OF BIRNAM.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS :—A parallel to the story of the forest of Birnam is found in Neocorus, *Chronik des Landes Dithmarschen*.<sup>1</sup> After relating how the common people of Dithmarschen, angered at the heavy taxes imposed upon them, outwitted and killed Count Rudolph of Böcklenborg, the chronicler adds :

"Stellerborg iss oock also up Pingsten ingenhahnen, do de Hafe-lüde vam Schlate affgegahn tho spelen, hefft de Pörtner, mit Gelde besteken, de Porte thogedahn, de Ditmarschen averst sind, mit Maien besteken unnd in den Händen, hertho gekamen, datt men se nicht kennen können, hebben se verjaget unnd geschlagen unnd upt Schlott getagen unnd geschleiffet, de Pörtner hedde geropen : *de Wold de kumt*."

Neocorus is undecided as to the date of the fall of Böcklenborg and mentions two years, 1127 and 1144.

There is no record of the Stellerborg incident in the chronicles of Hansen and Wolf, nor in Bolten's history.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by F. C. Dahlmann, Kiel, 1827, vol. i, 323.